

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A self-cleaning apparatus for transferring, collecting, and disposing of waste material from a patient, comprising:

a waste material transfer hose having an inlet and an outlet for transferring waste material from the patient to the apparatus;

a waste material collection chamber having a collection chamber inlet in communication with said outlet of said waste material transfer hose and a collection chamber outlet;

a vacuum source connected to said waste material collection chamber by a vacuum line; and

a cleaning fluid chamber for receiving a cleaning fluid, said cleaning fluid chamber being arranged to communicate with and receive said inlet of said waste material transfer hose.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:

a float movably disposed within said vacuum line to close said vacuum line to prevent waste material within said waste material collection chamber from being drawn into said vacuum line by said vacuum source, when said waste material collection chamber is filled to capacity.

3. The apparatus of claim 2 further comprising a disposal pump in communication with said collection chamber outlet of said waste material collection chamber to pump waste material out of said waste material collection chamber through said collection chamber outlet.

4. The apparatus of claim 3 further comprising a switch in electrical contact with said float and said disposal pump, such that when said float closes said vacuum line, said disposal pump is activated to dispose of waste material in said waste material collection chamber through said collection chamber outlet.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein said disposal pump is a peristaltic pump connected to a drain to dispose of waste material.

6. The apparatus of claim 2 further comprising a filter disposed within said vacuum line between said vacuum source and said float to prevent waste from being drawn into said vacuum source.

7. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein said cleaning fluid chamber is positioned upstream of said inlet of said waste material transfer hose and said waste material collection chamber, to permit the cleaning of said waste material transfer hose and said waste material collection chamber.

8. The apparatus of claims 3, wherein said cleaning fluid chamber is positioned upstream of said inlet of said waste material transfer hose and said waste material collection chamber, to permit the cleaning of said waste material transfer hose, said waste material collection chamber and said disposal pump, when said cleaning fluid is drawn into said inlet of said waste material transfer hose and transferred and disposed of by said apparatus.

9. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein a waste material interface is connected to said inlet of said waste material hose, said waste material interface being a suction nozzle.

10. An apparatus for transferring, collecting and disposing of a material, comprising:

a material transfer hose having an inlet and an outlet for transferring material to the apparatus;

a material collection chamber having a collection chamber inlet in communication with said outlet of said material transfer hose and a collection chamber outlet;

a vacuum source connected to said material collection chamber by a vacuum line to draw material into said material collection chamber through said material transfer hose;

a disposal pump in communication with said collection chamber outlet to pump material out of said material collection chamber to dispose of material; and

a cleaning fluid chamber for receiving a cleaning fluid, said cleaning fluid chamber being arranged to communicate with said inlet of said material transfer hose to permit cleaning fluid to be drawn into said inlet of said material transfer hose to clean said material transfer hose, said material collection chamber and said disposal pump.

11. The apparatus of claim 10 further comprising a float movably disposed within said vacuum line to close said vacuum line to prevent material within said material collection chamber from being drawn into said vacuum line by said vacuum source when said material collection chamber is filled to capacity.

12. The apparatus of claim 11 further comprising a filter disposed within said vacuum line between said vacuum source and said float.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising a switch activated by said float, such that when said float closes said vacuum line, said disposal pump is activated to pump material out of said material collection chamber through said collection chamber outlet.

14. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said disposal pump is a peristaltic pump in further communication with a sewer drain, such that material is disposed of in a sewer.

15. A method of cleaning a material transfer, collecting and disposal apparatus having at least a cleaning fluid chamber, a material transfer hose, a material collection chamber having an inlet in fluid communication with said material transfer hose and an outlet, and a vacuum source connected to said material collection chamber, comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing said cleaning fluid chamber with a cleaning fluid;

(b) inserting said material transfer hose into said cleaning fluid chamber; and

(c) activating said vacuum source such that said cleaning fluid is drawn into said material transfer hose and said material collection chamber through said inlet of said material transfer hose to clean said material transfer hose and said material collection chamber.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising the steps of:

(d) de-activating said vacuum source; and

(e) disposing of said cleaning fluid from said outlet of said material collection chamber after said material transfer hose and said material collection chamber have been cleaned.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said disposing step (e) is performed by a disposal pump positioned in fluid communication with said outlet of said material collection chamber.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein said cleaning fluid cleans said disposal pump as said cleaning fluid is pumped therethrough.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said disposal pump disposes of said cleaning fluid in a drain.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein said de-activating step (d) is performed automatically by a switch activated when said material collection chamber is filled to capacity with said cleaning fluid.